



February 10, 2015

Transportation Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Legislative Office Building, Room 2300  
Hartford, CT 06106

**RE: H.B. 6343: An act concerning the restoration of the Housatonic Rail Line**

Dear Representative Guerrero, Senator Maynard, Senator Boucher, Representative O'Dea and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG), we would like to voice our support for H.B. 6343: An act concerning the restoration of the Housatonic Rail Line.

The Housatonic Railroad's freight service plays a critical role in the regional economy supporting the largest employers in our region. The 37 mile portion of State owned track between New Milford and the Massachusetts border in Canaan has more than exceeded its useful life and needs to be replaced. Today the railroad is operating on rail that was manufactured in the 1920's and derailments are much too common. When these derailments occur on the portion of this track that runs right next to the Housatonic River there could be serious environmental consequences.

This rail line also plays an important role in reducing truck traffic along our two lane highways. According to the Housatonic Railroad, just one average sized train moving from Danbury to Pittsfield effectively removes 120 to 150 trucks from Connecticut roads such as Route 7 in rural towns such as Kent and Cornwall. With renewed interest in upgrading long neglected infrastructure throughout the State this is the time to remedy a problem that has existed for far too long.

The NHCOG also plans to work with its member towns to consider and plan for the regional economic and land use impacts of possible restored passenger rail service on the Housatonic Railroad.

Restoring the tracks used by the Housatonic Rail Road will help to retain jobs in our region, prevent future derailments, reduce truck traffic on our rural State roads, and offer the potential for additional economic development in our region.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn Ayer,

Community & Economic Development Director